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For Immediate Release: January 25, 2005
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Provincetown Church Fire Deemed Accidental

Chief Michael Trovato and State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan announced, as a result of the investigation into the fire at Saint Peter's Church, the cause is accidental, most likely an electrical event.

At 6:30 a.m. an automatic fire alarm was reported at Saint Peter's church on Prince Street in Provincetown.

Chief Trovato was the first on the scene and reported heavy smoke coming from the steeple area in the front of the church at the same time there was heavy fire on the second floor in the rear. Provincetown firefighters made an aggressive attack on the first and second floor, and managed to knock down a lot of the fire in that area. Unfortunately, the fire had long extended to the roof area and was in the wall. The balloon frame construction of the historic church allowed for rapid extension of the fire.

While the attack was going on, Chief Trovato ordered the second alarm at 6:38 a.m. bringing units from Truro and Wellfleet to the fire, and coverage units to the empty stations. Fortunately, the roads were open and units could get to the church area. The snow banks made work much harder for firefighters to work and safely get around.

Realizing that the fire was extending across the roof area and the toll taken on personnel from the cold and wind, Chief Trovato ordered the third alarm bringing in units from Eastham, Brewster, Orleans, Harwich and Yarmouth. The major effort at that time was to control the fire and prevent spread to the rectory on the east side of the Church. Every effort was made to prevent injury to the firefighters and extinguish the fire.

Fortunately, the tabernacle and most of the statutes were saved.

Provincetown Rescue people set up a medical and rehabilitation area in the gym at the High School, which was only 300 feet away. This way crews could be checked and warmed up in a planned rotation.

Barnstable County Control Center moved other fire and rescue units from the central and upper Cape to cover the empty stations to deal with the ongoing incidents in those areas. There were 80 firefighters and rescue personnel involved in fighting this fire. There was one minor firefighter injury and no civilian injuries.

Fire Marshal Stephen Coan was on the scene to provide assistance to the Provincetown Fire Department and coordinate Department of Fire Services resources such as the Incident Support Unit and personnel. A State Police fire investigator assigned to the State Fire Marshal's Office assisted by an ATF investigator determined the cause of the fire.